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## **Meeting the Challenge for Educational Excellence:**

**What General and Special Education Teachers  
and Support Personnel Say  
About Addressing the Social,  
Emotional, and Behavioral Needs of  
Iowa's Students**

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*October 1999*

“... ”

recent graduates are under prepared on the very skills they believe are the most important for meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

”

“... ”

field experiences were especially critical to learning how to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

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**What General and Special Education Teachers**  
**and Support Personnel**  
**Say About Addressing the Social, Emotional, and**  
**Behavioral Needs of Iowa's Students**

October 1999

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**RESOURCE CENTER**  
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# Table of contents

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◆ Executive Summary .....	1
◆ Meeting the Challenge .....	4
◆ Method and Instrumentation .....	8
Sample .....	12
Procedure .....	13
Data Analysis .....	14
◆ Results .....	14
Demographic Data .....	15
Descriptive Data .....	16
Factor Analyses .....	21
Responses to Open-ended Items .....	26
Priorities for Continuing Education to Meet Demands of the Future .....	30
◆ Discussion .....	33
Limitations .....	33
Synthesis of Results .....	35
Implications for the Preservice and Continuing Education of Educators .....	38
◆ References .....	40

## Executive Summary

Are Iowa educators being prepared to teach students whose emotional status hinders their ability to learn, whose social competence weakens their ability to develop friendships, and whose behavior interferes with their own academic achievement as well as the learning and safety of others? In an attempt to answer this question, **365** general education teachers, special education teachers, and support/related services personnel (recent graduates of Iowa institutions of higher education) first rated the Importance of **23** specific skills that addressed the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. Second, the recent graduates rated their level of Preparedness in relationship to each skill. Next, they described those aspects of their preservice education program which were most helpful and recommended ways to improve preservice personnel preparation programs. Finally, they indicated the type of continuing education programs they prefer.

Recent graduates were randomly selected, and data were collected in the Spring of 1998. The responses to the **23** Likert scale items were separately factor analyzed for items on the Importance scale and items on the Preparedness scale. Five major factors were found; these were named based on item content: **I**-Student Centeredness, **II**-Systems With-it-ness, **III**-Diversity Competence, **IV**-Prosocial Expertise, and **V**-Personal Management.

The analyses of the factor scores revealed that general educators, special educators, and support and related service personnel concurred on the Importance of Factor **I**-Student Centeredness and Factor **IV**-Prosocial Expertise. On Factor **III**-Diversity Competence, general and special educators rated the item cluster higher in Importance than did support and related services

“**3** **65** general education teachers, special education teachers, and support/related services personnel (recent graduates of Iowa institutions of higher education) ...rated the **importance** and their level of **preparedness** in relationship to 23 specific skills that addressed the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.”

personnel. In contrast, support and related services personnel rated the item clusters on Factor **II**-Systems With-it-ness, higher in importance than general and special education teachers. On Factor **V**-Personal Management, general education teachers placed greater emphasis on its importance than did special education teachers or support and related services personnel.

When the responses on the Importance and Preparedness scales were grouped, the greatest disparities among professional groups were observed in the items related to **a**) personal time and stress management, **b**) collaborating with child service agencies, **c**) serving students with significant mental health needs, **d**) motivating reluctant learners and students with challenging behaviors, and **e**) recognizing early warning signs and taking appropriate action in regard to those warning signs. Briefly, educators generally felt under prepared in these five areas.

Preservice education that was viewed as particularly helpful included practica in which recent graduates worked directly with diverse students in a variety of situations, experiences with families and community agencies, and classes with professors who described case studies and related personal experiences. All groups desired increased skills and knowledge related to diversity competence and prosocial expertise. A desire for greater knowledge of computer applications also was expressed.

Respondents indicated a preference for Continuing Education to be either on-site or regionally delivered. They viewed college/university coursework positively. The least preferred continuing education options were statewide training, web-based education, and training packets.

“**A**ll groups [of educators surveyed] desired increased skills and knowledge related to diversity competence and prosocial expertise.

...the recent graduates included in the survey reported that addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of *all students is a critical role and responsibility of our schools.*

”

In sum, the recent graduates included in the survey reported that addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of **all students is a critical role and responsibility of our schools**. They indicated they had experienced different levels of preparedness for addressing these areas of student need. Taken together, their responses have important implications for preservice and continuing education programs. Generally speaking, recent graduates expressed a desire for both greater depth **and** a broader range of educational experiences and expertise than they now receive.

## Meeting the Challenge: What General and Special Education Teachers and Support Personnel Say About Addressing the Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs of Iowa's Students

“ . . .

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”

Public education continues to witness a wave of reform initiatives characterized by administrative decentralization, greater family and community involvement, interagency and interdisciplinary teaming (Hendrickson & Omer, 1995), and inclusion of at-risk students and students with disabilities in general education settings (Gable & Hendrickson, in press). Simultaneously, revised perspectives on human cognition, emotions, and intelligence (eg., Damasio, 1995; Gardner, 1983) are beginning to impact education. Unfortunately, as we approach the 21st century, threats to personal safety, emotional stability, academic achievement, and social competence of our nation's children are widespread (All Systems Failure, 1993; Koyanagi & Gaines, 1993). In Iowa (Iowa Department of Education, 1997-1998) and across the United States (Hodgkinson, 1996), teachers and related service personnel face mounting pressure to assess, manage, counsel, and instruct an increasingly diverse student population (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Moreover, they are expected to do so in an accountable, effective manner (Smith, January, 1999).

In 1994, the Iowa Behavioral Initiative (IBI) was introduced in Iowa as a school-improvement, systems change effort within schools. The IBI was expanded and renamed in 1997 to acknowledge that a "school-based" initiative was not sufficient to address comprehensively students' social, emotional, behavioral and intellectual needs. At that time, the initiative now known as Success4 (S4) emerged. The name S4 refers to the need to include Kids, Families, Schools and Communities as equal partners in

planning and implementing programs aimed at promoting the social, emotional, behavioral and intellectual development of all students. Success for each of the 4 participant groups, in each of the 4 domains is the underlying theme to Success4. S4 became a major vehicle for implementing systemic and systematic change processes in Iowa Communities. Approximately 150 of Iowa's 375 school districts voluntarily chose to include social, emotional, behavioral and/or intellectual goals within their required school-improvement processes as a part of their S4 implementation. These schools recognize social-emotional health and well-being are foundations for optimal learning and academic growth within their schools (Catalano and Hawkins, 1995)

These and similar beliefs (eg., Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998) provide a sound basis for evaluating efforts to improve education. An effective educational system must be multidimensional and responsive. As Gardner notes in *Frames of Mind* (1983), students know and learn in unique ways. Emotions are inextricably linked to learning (Damasio, 1995). Effective schools, therefore, are schools which respond to the emotional needs and unique characteristics of individual students (Koyanagi & Gaines, 1993). Effective schools develop support systems for the individual student, especially the student who lives in poverty (Hodgkinson, 1996). States with the highest percentage of dropouts, notes Hodgkinson, have the highest percentage of parents in poverty, highest percentage of pregnant teens, and the highest percentage of violent juvenile deaths. Repeating a grade almost doubles a student's chance of dropping out. Hodgkinson's prevention agenda includes keeping people healthy and off drugs, keeping low-income families in housing, keeping families together, keeping people out of prisons, and keeping people above the poverty level. How, one might ask, can schools possibly affect these outcomes?

“Effective schools, therefore, are schools which respond to the emotional needs and unique characteristics of individual students (Koyanagi & Gaines, 1993).”

“  
**A** fresh look at the curriculum of schools necessarily extends beyond the traditional curriculum to include social competence, affective development, personal adjustment, the maintenance of friendships, behavioral self-control and developmentally appropriate decision-making.”

Adelman and Taylor (1997) recommend that school districts develop social support networks for students and families as a strategy for improving student adjustment and achievement. They and others (Hendrickson & Omer, 1995) contend that social support systems are not a luxury. For example, they note that up to **50%** of students visiting health clinics in comprehensive service school health centers do *not* have medical concerns. Instead, these students self-refer for emotional and psychological distress, problems related to sexual and physical abuse, alcohol, drugs, and so on. Clearly, schools which deny or ignore the behavioral and emotional needs of students fail to reach many students. As a result, these same schools fail to teach priority academic subjects such as reading, writing, science, and math (Pomerantz, 1997) to many Iowa students.

Thousand and colleagues (1997) argue that we must undergo a paradigmatic shift in our conceptualization of “curriculum” if schools, high schools in particular, are to be successful. A paradigm shift would imply that standard practices and benchmarks which historically have served schools well may no longer be appropriate or sufficient. A fresh look at the curriculum of schools necessarily extends beyond the traditional curriculum to include social competence, affective development, personal adjustment, the maintenance of friendships, behavioral self-control, and developmentally appropriate decision-making.

Adelman and Taylor (1997) recommend that schools identify and engage in activities which create classroom environments that enable all students to learn; respond to and prevent crises; support students in transition; increase home involvement in schooling; and enhance outreach efforts to create greater community involvement and support. Effective teaching

and learning in today's schools no longer is a straightforward enterprise, and effective teaching in tomorrow's schools will require a range of new competencies and strategies.

Dwyer, Osher, and Warger (1998) describe the characteristics of safe schools and schools which are responsive to children. Such schools rely on meaningful involvement of families, positive relationships among students and staff, open expression of feelings, counseling services for students who have been neglected or abused, and support services for students in transition, especially those transitioning from school to the workplace. Dwyer et al's recommendations align well with the call for collaborative leadership and the desire for continuous improvement set forth in the *Governor's Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century* (Pomerantz, 1997). The "Pomerantz Report" also promotes the establishment of strong family, community, and school relationships.

Thus, in the context of significant social, economic, and demographic change, we ask the following questions:

- ◆ To what degree are teachers in Iowa willing and able to respond to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of their students?
- ◆ As experienced teachers retire, school children of the 21st century increasingly will be taught by educators who have recently graduated. How much importance do these educators place on meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs and challenges of their students?

“To what degree are teachers in Iowa willing and able to respond to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of their students?”

”

- ◆ Do they view such work as a legitimate classroom and school priority, or do they envision other realities and responsibilities as the key to helping students succeed?

The attitudes and skills of recent graduates most assuredly will impinge on the adjustment and achievement of Iowa's students. Yet, there are limited data on how well recent graduates are doing or what knowledge and skills they need to further develop.

The goal of the present study was to gather information on the perspectives of recent graduates of Iowa's institutions of higher education (IHEs). Specifically, this study queried general education teachers, special education teachers, and support and related services personnel who had graduated within the past 1 to 3 years. The two main objectives were 1) to ascertain the level of Importance recent graduates place on addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students attending Iowa schools, and 2) to determine the level of Preparedness they reached (in relationship to meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students) during their preservice education programs. In addition, we wanted recent graduates **a)** to identify strengths of their preservice programs, **b)** to make recommendations for improving personnel preparation programs, and **c)** to identify their own future professional development priorities.

## Method and Instrumentation

The steering committee of the Iowa Higher Education Network, a team of **10** educators from various public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), an area education agency (AEA), and the Department of Education designed the IHE Statewide

Survey. The format and items of the IHE survey were based on a questionnaire developed by the Iowa Behavioral Initiative (IBI) (1997) as part of its statewide needs assessment process. During a 3-month period beginning in late January, 1998, a preliminary instrument focusing on the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students was designed. After a series of revisions based on expert opinion (ie, teachers, teacher educators) and review by committee members, the "IHE Statewide Survey" was field-tested with **35** respondents. Content and format recommendations from the field test were examined by the committee, and final modifications were made to the instrument in March, 1998. No significant changes were made in the format of instrument at that time. Rather, changes were made to improve item readability and clarity.

Three parallel forms of the single page (front and back) survey were developed: one survey for general educators (see Table 1), one for special educators, and one for support and related services personnel. On the front and top of the survey, a short introductory paragraph described the intent of the questionnaire. Below this explanation, directions for completing the survey were presented in two boxes. The directions in the box at the left pertained to rating Importance of the item. The directions in the box on the right pertained to rating the Preparedness of the educator as a result of his or her preservice preparation program. The respondents were instructed to first complete all of the items in relationship to Importance. The directions indicated that upon completion of rating Importance respondents were to read each item a second time and rate their Preparedness.

The survey instrument contained **23** items related to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. These items

“**T**he survey instrument contained 23 items related to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. These items were rated on Importance and Preparedness.”

”

**Table 1. Abbreviated Items in the General Education Teacher Survey**

Items	Responses	
	Preparedness	Importance
1. Treating all students at all times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence.	1. _____	_____
2. Having the knowledge to adapt coursework/class demands to enable all students to be successfully engaged in meaningful learning.	2. _____	_____
3. Being a faculty member in a school that collaborates with parents, community agencies, and the student to meet each student's social, emotional, and behavioral needs.	3. _____	_____
4. Having challenging but appropriate social and behavioral expectations for students who may be at-risk, have disabilities, and/or present unique instructional challenges.	4. _____	_____
5. Being able to recognize early signs of social, emotional, and behavioral problems, and knowing the action to take to get/give students appropriate assistance.	5. _____	_____
6. Knowing about published curricula, local resources, and appropriate strategies for the effective teaching of social and behavioral skills to students (including students from diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds).	6. _____	_____
7. Having skills and knowledge to collaborate with special educators and support services (e.g., speech/language pathologist, psychologist) to meet the educational needs of students with challenging behavior and serious social and emotional problems.	7. _____	_____
8. Having sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge to apply effective strategies which promote prosocial behavior of all students.	8. _____	_____
9. Having sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge to manage classes that include students with challenging behavior and/or complex social and emotional needs.	9. _____	_____
10. Collaborating with staff from other child service agencies (e.g., Mental health services, DHS, etc.) who are involved with a student or a family.	10. _____	_____
11. Having skills to direct and support the work of paraprofessionals in school settings (classrooms, hallways, lunchroom, etc.).	11. _____	_____
12. Having knowledge and skills to access services that help address persistent, serious academic difficulties students may be experiencing.	12. _____	_____
13. Having the ability to gain the respect of reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior.	13. _____	_____
14. Having the knowledge and skills for including students with severe social, emotional, and behavioral problems in my classes or courses.	14. _____	_____
15. Having expertise in motivating reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior.	15. _____	_____
16. Having effective personal time management and stress management skills.	16. _____	_____
17. Possessing and applying knowledge about school structure and organization (e.g., traffic patterns, scheduling of classes and passing periods, etc.) to promote appropriate student behavior.	17. _____	_____

Table 1. (continued)

		Preparedness	Importance
18.	Having skills in assessing individual students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs and preparing instructional objectives.	18. _____	_____
19.	Possessing skills to collaborate with students' families in order to resolve social, emotional, and behavioral problems of students.	19. _____	_____
20.	Having the skills and knowledge to serve students with significant mental health needs in my classroom.	20. _____	_____
21.	Having knowledge and skills to negotiate effectively with the administration, other teachers, parents, and the community on behalf of students.	21. _____	_____
22.	Possessing skills to collaborate with families of diverse ethnic backgrounds in order to resolve social, emotional, and behavioral problems of students.	22. _____	_____
23.	Having cultural sensitivity in recognizing and accommodating for the social, emotional, or behavioral characteristics of students (e.g., gender, ethnicity, economic circumstances).	23. _____	_____

• **What were strengths about your training program? (Circle any that apply.)**

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. low faculty: student ratio   | b. practicum experiences |
| c. course sequence              | d. small student body    |
| e. faculty supervision          | f. mentoring program     |
| g. relations with local schools | h. faculty experience    |
| i. other _____                  | j. other _____           |

• **In what areas do you feel that your training program should have provided you more support, information, or training?**

• **What are your continuing education (inservice) needs to prepare you to meet the teaching demands of the future?**

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Note: Reliability coefficients for the Importance and Preparedness scales were .91 on the Guttman Split-half; .87 on the Spearman-Brown Split-half; and, the correlation between forms was .77.

were rated on Importance and Preparedness. In addition, there was one multiple choice item, and two open-ended items with spaces provided for responses.

Respondents rated each of the items on a Likert scale of 0 to 3. Zero (0) was "not important" or "not prepared;" one (1) was "somewhat important" or "somewhat" prepared; two (2) was "important or prepared;" and three (3) meant "very important" or

"*very prepared*" In addition, (not shown in Table 1) recent graduates were asked to rank their preferences for the manner in which continuing education (i.e., professional development) activities be delivered. As can be seen in Table 1, the recent graduates were asked to respond to open-ended questions aimed at identifying **a)** aspects of their professional preparation program that contributed to being able to meet the complex social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students; **b)** features of their preservice education program which need to be enhanced or modified; and **c)** their continuing education priorities (so that they might meet the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students).

Finally, the respondents were asked to provide basic demographic information on themselves--their total number of years in education, their highest degree, their ethnicity, and their gender.

Respondents were not identified by the personnel preparation program from which they graduated, and an analysis of responses by IHEs was neither sought nor conducted. Rather, the purpose of this study was to gather information which was generally applicable to educators and IHEs across Iowa.

## sample

Our goal was to survey twenty percent (**20%**) of the total population of general education teachers, special education teachers, and support and related services personnel who had graduated from an Iowa institution of higher education in the last **1** to **3** years. Twenty percent was selected because it represented a **90%** confidence level with a **.05** margin of error (see Asher, 1976).

Educators in private schools and agencies were not included in the study. A total population of **3,252** persons from the Department of Education data base (BEDS, 1997-1998) was identified, and a sample of approximately **25%** was drawn randomly.

*General education teachers* included any regular education teacher from preschool through 12th grade. *Special education teachers* included teachers working in any special education program (eg., resource room, multi-categorical self-contained with some integration) regardless of their students' disability label or the severity of the disabilities. *Support and related services personnel* included school social workers, speech and language pathologists, school psychologists, and special education consultants.

## Procedure

Data collection was scheduled to ensure that the most recent graduates had been employed a minimum of six or more months in a school district or area education agency (AEA) prior to completing the survey. This was accomplished by distributing the questionnaires in the spring of 1998.

An explanatory letter, the appropriate questionnaire (ie., general education teacher, special education teacher, support/related services personnel), and a stamped envelope with a return address was mailed to each educator's work address in April, 1998. The explanatory letter described the purpose of the study, explained the voluntary nature of participation, assured the potential respondent of confidentiality and anonymity, and provided names and telephone numbers of contact persons if the respondent had any questions.

Approximately three (3) weeks after the initial mailing, a follow-up request was sent to individuals who had not returned the survey. The Resource Center for Issues in Special Education at Drake University served as the distribution center for mail-outs.

## Data Analysis

Several strategies were employed to examine and analyze the data. First, factor analyses were conducted on all the Likert scale items for both the Importance and Preparedness responses. Factor analysis is a statistical procedure which results in the grouping or clustering of items. Different items group together to form a "factor" when submitted to a factor analysis. Essentially, items group because they are similar when the relationship between item means and variabilities are analyzed. Using factor analysis enabled us to focus on a small number of "factors" rather than the 23 individual items. After the factor analysis was conducted, each factor is given a short name in an attempt to capture the essence of its items (see Kim & Mueller, 1978).

A descriptive analysis (eg., means, standard deviations) of the Likert scale items was performed, all Likert scale items are rank ordered, and a discrepancy analysis of the differences between the Importance and Preparedness responses was made. Finally, the open-ended items were carefully examined to identify the variety of themes they represented.

## Results

The results are presented in four sections: demographic data, descriptive data, factor analyses (of Importance and Preparedness item responses), and responses to open-ended items.

## Demographic Data

A total of **365** surveys (**52.7%** of **693**) were returned. The return rate for general education teachers was **51%**; for special education teacher responses, **53%**; and for support and related services personnel, **61%**. Approximately **12%** worked part-time; **28%** were males, and **72%** were females. Teachers ranged in age from **22** to **58** with a median age of **27**.

Table 2 presents the number of years the respondents worked in education. Approximately **8%** had worked less than 1 year; **68%** had worked 1-5 years; **16%** had worked 6-10 years; and **8%** had worked over **11** years. Thirty percent (**30%**) of educators had **6** or more years experience in education. It is likely that persons with several years of experience were **a)** individuals who taught for a period of time and recently completed a master's degree and **b)** paraprofessional educators who earned a bachelor's degree while/after working in the schools for a number of years.

**Table 2. Number of Years of Experience in Education**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Years</b>
	<b>0</b>	<b>1-5</b>	<b>6-10</b>	<b>11-15</b>	<b>16-20</b>	<b>&gt;20</b>
Reg. Ed.	12	147	24	3	0	3
Spec. Ed.	13	71	29	12	1	4
Sup./Rel.	4	32	7	2	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29 (8%)</b>	<b>250 (68%)</b>	<b>60 (16%)</b>	<b>17 (5%)</b>	<b>2 (&lt;1%)</b>	<b>7 (2%)</b>

Note: General Education Teachers = 189 (52%); Special Educators = 130 (35%); Support/Related Services Personnel = 46 (13%); Total N = 365

Seven percent (**7%**) of the respondents had master's degrees, and **1%** had earned specialist degrees. Approximately one third of the respondents had received their most recent degree within the last **12** months, one third within **2** years, and one-third within **3** years.

Three percent (**3%**) of the recent graduates were minorities (ie, African American (N=**12**), Native American (N=**6**), Hispanic (N=**3**), and Asian American (N=**2**). This compares with state statistics of **91.8%** White, **3.5%** African American, **2.6%** Hispanic, **1.6%** Asian American, and **.5%** Native American (Basic Educational Data Survey, 1997-1998).

“ . . .

for the most part, respondents viewed themselves as ranging from “somewhat prepared” to “prepared” on these five critical skills. None of the groups of recent graduates viewed themselves as reaching the criterion level of “fully prepared” on the top five skills.

”

## Descriptive Data

**Importance.** When items were ranked for Importance according to each professional group—general education teachers, special education teachers, and support and related services personnel—the same two items emerged in **1st** and **2nd** place. These two items were **#1)** *treating all students at all times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence*, and **#2)** *having the knowledge to adapt coursework/classroom demands to enable all students to be successfully engaged in meaningful work*. In addition each of the three groups independently rated item **#15)** *having expertise in motivating reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior*, in the top **5** items of Importance.

When the scores for Importance of all respondents were combined, items **#1, 2, 15, 13,** and **9** ranked **1st - 5th**. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for these five items which were ranked highest for Importance. As can be seen, *treating students with respect, adapting coursework and classroom demands to create meaningful assignments, motivating students,*

*gaining student respect, and managing challenging behavior* were considered very important competencies.

**Preparedness** When items were ranked for **Preparedness** by professional group, general education teachers, special education teachers, and support and related services personnel—two items were identified in the top five of **Preparedness**. For each of the individual groups, items **#1** and **#18**, *treating all students at all*

**Table 3. Rankings of Importance of All Respondents**

Top Five Importance Items	Average	S. D.
#1 Treating all students at all times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence.	2.87	0.36
#2 Having the knowledge to adapt coursework/class demands to enable all students to be successfully engaged in meaningful learning.	2.79	0.47
#15 Having expertise in motivating reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior.	2.71	0.48
#13 Having the ability to gain the respect of reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior.	2.69	0.50
#9 Having sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge to manage classes that include students with challenging behavior and/or complex social and emotional needs.	2.68	0.54

*times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence, and having skills in assessing individual students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs and preparing instructional objectives*, respectively, were identified as relatively high in **Preparedness**. However, the average level of **Preparedness** for items **#1** and **#23** was **2.2** and **1.9** for general and special educators (scale = **0** to **3**); and **2.4** and **2.0** for related services personnel, respectively. These averages indicate that, for the most part, respondents viewed themselves as ranging from "somewhat prepared" to "prepared" on these five critical skills. None of the

groups of recent graduates viewed themselves as reaching the criterion level of "fully prepared" on the top five skills.

Table 4 presents the five skills which recent graduates (as one group) believed themselves to be most prepared to execute. As shown in Table 4, recent graduates rated their Preparedness highest for *treating students with respect, cultural sensitivity in relationship to accommodations, knowledge to promote prosocial skills, assessing student needs and developing instructional objectives, and adapting coursework to enable students to successfully engage in meaningful learning*. Only the first item—treating students with respect, however, had an average rating above **2**. Thus, in four of the top five areas of Preparedness recent graduates believed themselves to be less than "prepared" and by no means "fully prepared."

**Importance versus Preparedness** When the ratings of the top five items of Importance were compared with ratings of Preparedness each group of recent graduates rated Importance higher than Preparedness. This outcome further suggests

**Table 4. Rankings of Preparedness of All Respondents**

	<b>Top Five Preparedness Items</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>S. D.</b>
#1	Treating all students at all times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence.	2.21	0.72
#23	Having cultural sensitivity in recognizing the accommodation for the social, emotional, or behavioral characteristics of students .	1.88	0.82
#8	Having sufficient theoretical and practical knowledge to apply effective strategies which promote prosocial behavior of all students.	1.79	0.79
#18	Having skills in assessing individual student's social, emotional, and behavioral needs and preparing instructional objectives.	1.76	0.81
#2	Having the knowledge to adapt coursework/class demands to enable all students to be successfully engaged in meaningful learning.	1.75	0.75

that recent graduates are under prepared on the very skills they believe are most important for meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. The greatest discrepancies between Importance and Preparedness occurred for general education teachers. For general educators the discrepancies between Importance and Preparedness ranged from **1.13** to **1.23**; for special educators—.92 to **1.13**; and for support and related services providers—.76 to **1.07**.

In addition, we identified the five individual items which had the greatest disparity between ratings of Importance and Preparedness. The five most discrepant items for general education teachers, special education teachers, and support and related services personnel are presented in Table 5. As can be seen, *general educators had average discrepancies of the greatest magnitude, followed by special education teachers, and support and related services personnel, respectively.*

Table 5 also shows that each group of recent graduates shared items with large disparities between Importance and Preparedness and, each group had some unique items. Items #5 and #16 (i.e., *recognize early signs and take action; time and stress management*) were shared by general and special education teachers. General education teachers and related services personnel both reported *insufficient preparation in motivating reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior* (i.e., item #15). Special educators and related services personnel both reported *inadequate preparation in collaboration* (i.e., item #10) and *negotiation* (i.e., item #21) skills.

General educators alone indicated a relatively large disparity between Importance and Preparedness on *expertise to manage challenging behavior* (i.e., item #15) and *serving students*

“ . . .  
recent graduates are  
under prepared on the  
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meeting the social,  
emotional, and behavioral  
needs of students.”

**Table 5. Rankings of Average Item Discrepancies by Professional Group**

<b>Abbreviated Item</b>		<b>Discrepancy</b>
<b>General Education Teachers</b>		
#5	Recognize early signs...and take action...	1.33
#16	Have effective personal time and stress management skills.	1.23
#9	Have expertise to manage challenging behavior...complex needs.	1.22
#15	Have expertise to motivate reluctant & challenging learners.	1.21
#20	Serve students with significant mental health needs.	1.17
<b>Special Education Teachers</b>		
#11	Have skills to direct and support paraprofessionals.	1.32
#16	Have effective personal time and stress management skills.	1.27
#10	Collaborate with other service agencies involved with student & family.	1.19
#21	Be able to negotiate effectively with administrators, teachers, family...	1.17
#5	Recognize early signs...and take action...	1.14
<b>Support and Related Services Personnel</b>		
#10	Collaborate with other service agencies involved with student & family.	1.13
#21	Be able to negotiate effectively with administrators, teachers, family...	1.07
#15	Have expertise to motivate reluctant & challenging learners.	1.05
#2	Have knowledge to adapt coursework/demands for successful engagement.	1.00
#3	Be member of school which collaborates with parents, agencies, student...	1.00

with significant mental health needs (ie, item #20). Special educators reported insufficient skill in working with paraprofessionals (ie, item #11). Related services graduates believed themselves lacking in knowledge to adapt coursework/classroom demands for successful student engagement (ie, item #2). They also reported a relatively large discrepancy between the Importance of being a member of a school which collaborates (ie, item #3) and their Preparedness to fulfill such a role.

## Factor Analyses

As noted earlier, a factor analysis was employed to reduce the complexity associated with interpreting the meanings of the Importance and Preparedness responses to the 23 Likert items. The items were found to cluster into five factors (see Table 6). Items which were common to both Importance and Preparedness were used to name the five factors. The five factors were named I-Student Centeredness, II-Systems With-it-ness, III-Diversity Competence, IV-Prosocial Expertise, and V-Personal Management. Table 6 presents the factor names and illustrative items.

The Importance responses included in Table 6 show that two items "loaded" (shared variation in common) on Factor I, seven on Factors II and III, Five on Factor IV, and One on Factor V. Item #4 did not cluster on any factor. In comparison, the analysis of Preparedness responses shows that four items clustered on Factor I, seven on Factor II, four on Factor III, six on Factor IV, and two on Factor V.

Figure 1 was created to depict the unique and common items which comprise each factor. It shows the relative positions of the survey items in relationship to each of the five factors

Table 6. **Factor Names and Illustrative Items**

Factor	Item
<b>I-Student Centeredness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treating all students at all times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence.</li> </ul>
<b>II-Systems With-it-ness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborating with staff from other child service agencies (e.g., Mental health services, DHS, etc.) who are involved with the student or family.</li> </ul>
<b>III-Diversity Competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possessing skills to collaborate with families of diverse ethnic backgrounds in order to resolve social, emotional, and behavioral problems of students.</li> </ul>
<b>IV-Prosocial Expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having expertise in motivating reluctant learners and students with challenging behavior.</li> </ul>
<b>V-Personal Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having effective personal time management and stress management skills.</li> </ul>

Table 7. **The Five Factor Solutions for Importance and Preparedness**

Importance					Preparedness				
I	II	III	IV	V	I	II	III	IV	V
1	5	3	8	16	1	7	5	8	16
2	6	18	9		2	10	6	9	17
	7	19	13		3	11	22	13	
	10	20	14		4	12	23	14	
	11	21	15			19		15	
	12	22				20		18	
	17	23				21			

Note: Item 4 was the only item that did not cluster within a factor in both analyses.

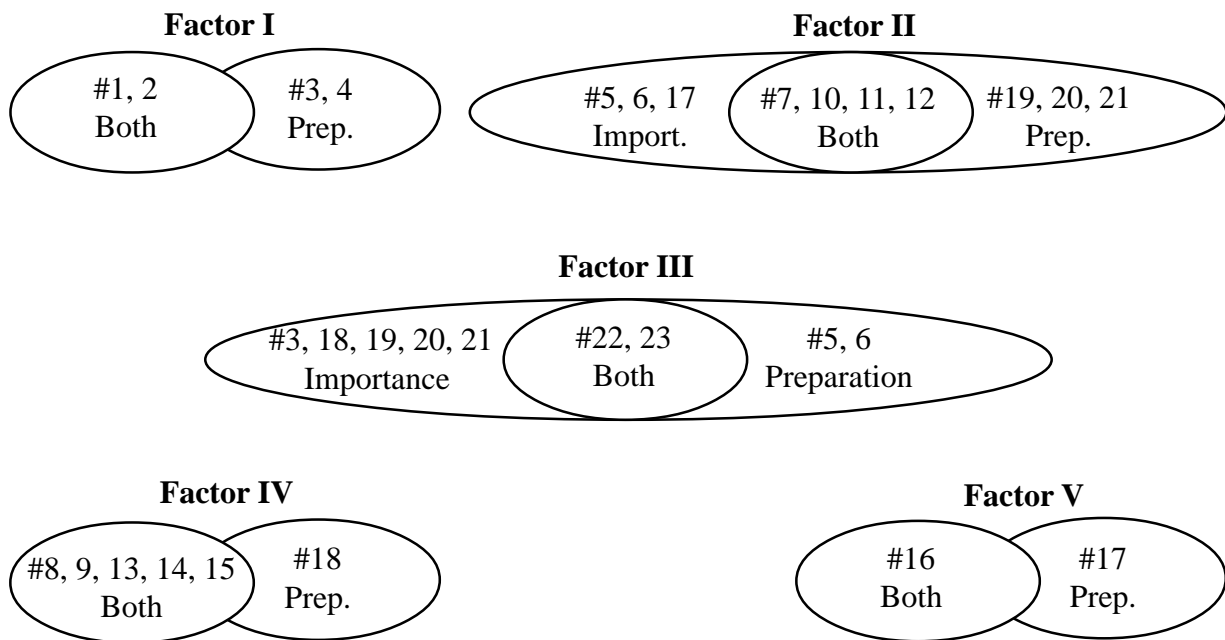


Figure 1. Items Comprising Each of the Five Factors

Note: For example, Factor II-Systems With-it-ness contained three items unique to Importance (i.e., #5, 6, & 17) which are presented on the left. Four items (e.g., #7, 10, 11, & 12) were common to both and are found in the center oval. Three items (i.e., #19, 20, & 21) were unique to Preparedness and are found to the right of the center.

(represented by ovals). Items common to both Importance and Preparedness were placed in the center ovals. Those items unique to the Importance analysis appear on the left. Items unique to the Preparedness analysis appear on the right in each factor.

Examination of Table 6 and Figure 1 reveals that some items were common to a factor in both analyses, some remained unique to a factor, and some shifted their locations on a factor. For example, the two items from the Importance analysis that "loaded" or co-varied on Factor I were joined by two items on Factor I from the Preparedness analysis on this factor.

**student centeredness** As noted above, Factor I consisted of two items shared by the Importance and Preparedness (i.e., items #1 & 2) and two items unique to Preparedness (i.e., items #3

& 4). Together these items indicate that recent graduates of institutions of higher education in Iowa view schools as complex student centered places. Also, they view meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students as requiring a student centered orientation to assessment and intervention. In essence, Student Centeredness pertains to the demand that educational environments demonstrate respect and show adaptability to each student's individual needs and that faculty and staff are prepared to collaborate with parents and others to establish appropriate social and behavioral expectations.

**Systems With-it-ness.** The content of shared items clustering in Factor II included such skills as *having skills and knowledge to collaborate with special educators...*, *collaborating with staff...*, *having skills to direct and support the work of paraprofessionals...*, and *having knowledge and skills to access services*. Items unique to the Importance factor indicated concern with being able to *recognize early signs of social, emotional, and behavioral problems...*, and *possessing and applying knowledge about school structure and organization...*. Items unique to Preparedness dealt with *possessing skills to collaborate...*, *having skills and knowledge to serve...*, and *having skills and knowledge to negotiate effective...on behalf of students*. The factor of Systems With-it-ness recognizes that school personnel must be able to work effectively within and across systems if they are to directly and indirectly serve students with challenging social, emotional, and behavioral needs.

**Diversity competence.** Factor III hinges on the ability to *collaborate with families of diverse ethnic backgrounds...* and *having cultural sensitivity...*. Four items unique to Importance cluster on Factor III: *assessing individual students...needs and*

*preparing instructional objectives, collaborating with...families..., ...knowledge to serve students with...mental health needs..., and...negotiate effectively...* Unique to **Preparedness** was *knowledge of...curricula, local resources, and ...strategies...for effective teaching.* **Diversity Competence** recognizes the heterogeneity of students and the need for faculty and staff to respond appropriately to learners with unique ways of knowing who have diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

**Prosocial Expertise.** Five items clustered together in Factor IV. These shared items pertained to *...knowledge to apply appropriate strategies..., manage classes that include students with challenging behavior..., ...gain the respect of reluctant learners...and students with challenging behavior, include students with severe social, emotional, and behavioral problems..., and have expertise in motivating reluctant learners.* Unique to **Preparedness** was *having skills to assess...social, emotional, and behavioral needs and preparing instructional objectives.* **Prosocial Expertise** brings together a variety of competencies educators need to effectively integrate students with severe social, emotional, and behavioral issues into the classroom and school.

**Personal Management.** Factor V contained one common item and one unique to the **Preparedness** analysis. These items were *having effective personal time management and stress management skills, and possessing and applying knowledge about school structure and organization...to promote appropriate student behavior, respectively.* Factor V was the least complex of the factors. Factor V highlights the relationship between personal management skills and educator effectiveness in promoting appropriate student behavior.

## Responses to Open-ended Items

Responses to open-ended questions were read and categorized in multiple ways (eg., according to main themes related to delivery system, specific content). Table 8 presents one of the classification systems extracted from the responses to categorize preservice program strengths. Some percentages reported in the following section represent the combination of response categories.

“ . . .  
field experiences were  
especially critical to  
learning how to address  
the social, emotional, and  
behavioral needs of  
students.”

**Strengths of the Professional Preparation Program.** Teachers and support and related services personnel identified specific courses, content which might be found in a number of courses, teaching styles and expertise of professors, individuals in professional and nonprofessional roles, their own experiences and attributes, and field experiences as strengths of their preservice programs.

Table 8 reveals that **20%** of general education teachers, **16%** of special education teachers, and **27.5%** of support services personnel indicated that *field experiences were especially critical to learning how to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students*. When student teaching is added to field experience, **28%** of the general educators and **20%** of the special educators volunteered positive comments. In discussing field experiences, practica, and student teaching, the respondents indicated that *multiple experiences with diverse students in different educational settings were key to important learning opportunities*. Respondents also indicated that the professionals encountered in their field experiences (eg., cooperating teachers) were especially important to understanding how to relate to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

By combining three related categories, it can be seen that **30.9%** of general education teachers, **39.7%** of special education teachers, and **31.9%** of support and related services personnel reported specific coursework and specific content that was seen as a preservice program strength. The specific classes noted most often were *human development, special education classes, methods classes, cultural diversity, mainstreaming, and behavior analysis*. Content which respondents felt was useful for better addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students included *behavior management, counseling, curriculum development, theory and research, IEPs, individualization and diversity, communication skills, and teaching strategies*. By and large, positive comments about theory and research were more frequent in the responses of special education teachers and support and related services personnel.

Nine percent (**9%**) of the teachers responding indicated that *specific professors, advisors, and mentors were important to their education in relationship to students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs*. These individuals were described as having knowledge about the classroom, providing real-life examples, presenting case studies, having a good sense of humor, and employing role-plays and discussions to enhance student learning.

Approximately **5%** of the respondents indicated that personal attributes and experiences they brought to their preservice program were especially important in learning about the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students.

A number of students, **8%**, **10%**, and **17%**, appraised the structure, focus, and philosophy of their preservice programs as a

“... multiple experiences with diverse students in different educational settings was a key to important learning opportunities.”

Table 8. **Classification of Preservice Program Strengths**

Theme	General Education Teachers N (%)	Special Education Teachers N (%)	Support & Related Services Personnel N (%)
• Hands-on, Field & Practicum Experiences Multiple Experiences, Student Contact	37 (20%)	25 (16%)	13 (27.5%)
• <i>Specific Classes or Type of Classes:</i> Human Relations, Mainstreaming, Methods, CultDiv, Classrm Mngt, Communication, Beh Analysis	26 (14%)	18 (12%)	6 (13%)
• <i>Specific Content &amp; Format of Courses:</i> BehMngt, Curriculum Dev., Counseling, Real Issues, Theory & Research, Learning Styles, Access Resources, IEPs, Rights, Assessment, Adaptations, Law, Strategies, Communication	25 (14%)	35 (22%)	5 (11%)
• Recommendations, Negative Comments, or “No Strengths” Noted	16 (9.5%)	9 (6%)	4 (8.5%)
• Professor, Advisor, Mentor	17 (9%)	14 (9%)	0 (0%)
• Student Teaching	15 (8%)	7 (4%)	0 (0%)
• Program Philosophy & Focus; Total Curriculum of Program, Opportunities	15 (8%)	15 (10%)	8 (17%)
• Personal Knowledge, Experience, Attributes	10 (5%)	2 (1%)	1 (2%)
• Respect & Discuss Diversity, Individual Needs	8 (4%)	8 (5%)	3 (6%)
• Good Special Ed Program, Special Ed Classes	6 (3.5%)	9 (6%)	4 (8.5%)
• Cooperating Teacher; Other Professionals	6 (3.5%)	6 (4%)	1 (2%)
• Diversity of IHE Itself	1 (.5%)	1 (.5%)	0 (0%)
• On-the-Job Training; Real Life Situations	1 (.5%)	1 (.5%)	0 (0%)
• Graduate Work	1 (.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
• Peers, Interaction with Families	0 (0%)	6 (4%)	2 (4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>47</b>

whole. They noted *diversity on campus, multiple and diverse field-based opportunities, well-sequenced requirements, and good instruction* as important aspects of their programs.

Interestingly, when asked about **program strengths**, **9.5%** of the comments of general educators, **6%** of the comments of special educators, and **8.5%** of the comments of support staff either reported negative attributes of their programs, recommended specific changes for programs, or simply noted, “no strengths.”

### **Recommendations for Improving Professional Preparation.**

About **25%** of all recommendations were *related to increased school-based experiences; more diversity in experiences; earlier experiences; experiences with a range of learners, and, practicals linked to coursework* (See Table 9). Another quarter of the recommendations pertained to the specific content and format of classes offered at our colleges and universities. Respondents advised *improving methods courses to reflect realities of today's schools; more in-depth coverage of issues related to accommodations; strategies for classroom and behavior management; textbooks with applied information; strategies for individualizing to meet students' needs; and information for accessing resources.*

Thirteen percent (**13%**) of the teacher recommendations were to include *more special education content and course work in preservice preparation programs.* More knowledge for working with students with behavior disorders, gifted and talented, severe disabilities, and other challenges was viewed as critical. Counseling, meeting students' mental health needs, and education/special education law were identified as additional target areas for preservice.

Twelve percent (**12%**) of the recommendations of general education teachers, **11%** of the suggestions of special education teachers, and **18%** of the recommendations of support services personnel focused on *collaboration skills, especially working with other educators, parents, and outside agencies.*

A small percentage (**2 - 3%**) of the recommendations of teachers also indicated a need to learn about schools and how to negotiate effectively for themselves and their students. Another small percentage (**1.5 - 3%**) indicated the need for more information on cultural diversity and the continuum of learners.

## Priorities for Continuing Education to Meet Demands of the Future

**General education teachers.** In articulating their continuing education needs, many responses pertained to being admitted to a graduate program so the individual could obtain an advanced degree (e.g., master's degrees in counseling, administration, mathematics, reading). General education teachers were especially concerned with learning more about technology and its uses, including *assistive technology, behavior management, behavior modification, disciplining, classroom management and strategies for inclusion of students with disabilities and students from diverse backgrounds*.

**Special education teachers.** Special education teachers also frequently mentioned earning an advanced degree and completing an endorsement area (e.g., multi-categorical resource). They pinpointed specific targets often associated with special education: *post-secondary transitions, social skills training, technology and assistive technology, legal issues, collaboration expertise and inclusion strategies, sign language, and behavior management*. They also indicated an interest in classes related to specific disabilities (e.g., behavior disorders, learning disabilities, mental disabilities) and disorders (e.g., ADHD, autism). Special educators frequently noted the Importance of *keeping up with research and advances in the field*. They mentioned attending professional conferences and workshops to improve their knowledge and skills.

**Support and related services personnel.** Future plans of support and related services personnel were quite similar to those of special educators. This group of professionals were

Table 9. Recommendations for Improving Preservice Preparation Programs

Theme	General Education Teachers N (%)	Special Education Teachers N (%)	Support & Related Services Personnel N (%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Specific Content and Format of Courses:</i> Greater depth; More Interactive, Case Examples, Behavior Management, S-E-B Strategies; Accommodations for Spec Needs Students; Individualization Strategies; Guest Speakers; Realities &amp; Practical Info; School to Work; Student Curricula; Textbooks; Access Resources</li> </ul>	52 (29%)	28 (21%)	9 (20.5%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More Hands-on, Field, Practicum Experiences; More Varied Experiences; Early; Daily; Link with Direct Instruction</li> </ul>	46 (25%)	29 (22%)	12 (27.5%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More Special Ed; IEPs; BD; Work Except Students, Counseling; Law; Mental Health</li> </ul>	22 (13%)	18 (13.5%)	5 (12%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peers, Interaction w/Families, Professionals, Agencies, Collaboration; Job Shadowing</li> </ul>	21 (12%)	14 (10.5%)	8 (18%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Specific Classes or Type of Classe s:</i> Methods; Case Management; Social Problems; Stress, Conflict, &amp; Beh Mngt; S-E-B; Assessment; Social Skills; Counseling; Commun. Disorders</li> </ul>	11 (6%)	8 (6%)	6 (14%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Recommendations; Confused; Satisfied</li> </ul>	8 (4.5%)	4 (3%)	1 (2%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiation Skills; Gen Ed &amp; Sp Ed Together</li> </ul>	7 (3.5%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-the Job Issues; Prep Time</li> </ul>	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better Advising, Mentor with Classroom Experience; Broaden Subject Area Teaching</li> </ul>	3 (1.5%)	1 (.5%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More Cultural Diversity; Learner Continuum</li> </ul>	3 (1.5%)	4 (3%)	1 (2%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology</li> </ul>	2 (1%)	2 (1.5%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inservice Time &amp; Opportunities</li> </ul>	1 (.5%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared Student Teaching Experiences; Earlier, Full Year; One Part Special Education</li> </ul>	3 (1.5%)	7 (5%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut Subject Areas (6-9 hours); Fewer Gen Ed</li> </ul>	1 (.5%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better Prepare Principals, Counselors</li> </ul>	1 (.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personnel Prep Program Inadequate</li> </ul>	0 (0%)	2	1 (2%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paraprofessional</li> </ul>	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	1 (2%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time/Stress Management</li> </ul>	0 (0%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	181	134	44

interested in advanced degrees. Specific content of courses which interested support and related services personnel included *early childhood, English as a Second Language (ESL), behavior disorders, technology and assistive technology, assessment strategies, motivational strategies, working with agencies, and opportunities which might be offered over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN).*

Table 10. Preferred Mode of Delivering Staff Development Programs

Delivery Mode	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	1st & 2nd
<b>Onsite</b>	<b>1</b> 160 (42%)	<b>2</b> 73 (21%)	<b>4</b> 45 (13%)	<b>1st</b>
<b>Regional</b>	<b>2</b> 75 (19%)	<b>1</b> 89 (25%)	<b>3</b> 60 (17%)	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Coursework</b>	<b>3</b> 73 (19%)	<b>3.5</b> 60 (17%)	<b>1</b> 71 (20%)	<b>3rd</b>
<b>Study Group</b>	<b>4</b> 30 (8%)	<b>3.5</b> 60 (17%)	<b>2</b> 63 (18%)	<b>4th</b>
<b>TV/Distance Learning</b>	<b>5</b> 24 (6%)	<b>5</b> 28 (8%)	<b>5</b> 36 (10%)	<b>5th</b>
<b>Web-Based</b>	<b>6</b> 14 (4%)	<b>7</b> 18 (5%)	<b>7</b> 26 (7%)	<b>7th</b>
<b>Training Packages</b>	<b>7</b> 5 (1%)	<b>6</b> 26 (7%)	<b>6</b> 33 (9%)	<b>6th</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>8</b> 4 (1%)	<b>8</b> 14 (4%)	<b>8</b> 14 (4%)	<b>8th</b>

**Delivery Mode for Professional Inservice Programs.** Table 10 presents various options educators might use to receive continuing education. The first column on the left presents the location and type of inservice package—onsite, regional, traditional college coursework, study groups, distance learning, web-based learning, print training packages, and statewide training programs. The percentage of responses for which a given approach (eg, onsite) was ranked as the first choice (eg, **42%**), second choice (eg, **21%**), and third choice (eg, **13%**) appear in columns **2**, **3**, and **4**. The **5th** column on the far right presents the rank order when first and second choices are combined. The bold

numbers in the middle columns (eg, columns **2, 3**, and **4**) represent the rank order of each approach as the respondents' first, second, or third choice.

As can be seen in Table 10, respondents preferred inservice programs to be delivered onsite or regionally. Standard coursework appears to be the preferred format at this time. Continuing education programs which use technology, such as distance learning and the world wide web, have not yet gained favor with educators. Print training packages and statewide programs represent the least preferred types of continuing education.

## Discussion

General education teachers, special education teachers, and support/related services personnel who had been trained within the last **1** to **3** years were asked to rate the Importance of the specific knowledge and skills for addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral (S-E-B) needs of Iowa students with whom they work. The respondents then rated how well they had been prepared with regard to the **23** skill items surveyed. In addition, the respondents identified aspects of their preservice programs which they considered to be strengths, made recommendations for improving preservice education, and indicated their priorities for the content and delivery of continuing education programs.

## Limitations

Generalization of these results are limited by a number of factors. Although the sample of recent graduates was randomly selected, only **53%** of the questionnaires were returned. We do not have information on those individuals who did not respond, and consequently do not know if the results would have differed with

a larger return rate. Second, the use of a survey may have limited generality. In spite of relatively high reliability and validity coefficients (and confidence in the instrument), it is not possible to draw conclusions about how an individual carries out his or her professional responsibilities based on self-report survey data. For example, all three respondent groups rated "treating all students at all times with respect regardless of their social, emotional, or behavioral competence," as the most important job performance area. While they may strongly argue in favor of this belief and indicate that they were prepared to act in accordance with it, we have no way to confirm that their day-to-day behavior is reflected in this belief. We did not directly observe the participants, nor were data on students' perceptions of whether or not they were treated with respect at all times by a particular respondent gathered.

Another generalization issue relates to time. The present study was conducted in the spring of 1998 and only included respondents one to three years after graduation. The panel conducting this survey was unaware of any significant modifications in the teacher preparation programs in the state of Iowa which may have improved educators' abilities to meet the S-E-B needs of students, but it is possible that preservice education programs have changed in the intervening time period. Finally, the results are exclusive to the state of Iowa. To conclude that teachers and support and related services personnel in states such as New York, Texas, and California, for example, would respond in the same way would be to over-generalize.

## Synthesis of Results

Rank ordering by item averages and the factor analyses of general education, special education, and support and related services personnel responses as a group and as three separate sub-groups indicated discrepancies between preservice preparation and the importance educators place on specific skills and knowledge related to meeting the S-E-B needs and challenges of students exists. These results are not surprising in the sense that "on-the-job" training is a well-acknowledged phenomenon in education. In addition, many professional organizations and agencies are currently revising or calling for the modifications in preservice programs so to better prepare graduates to address the challenges schools and educators are expected to face in the 21st century.

The result of the two factor analyses of the data revealed that the skills and knowledge educators require to meet the S-E-B needs of students (K-12) can be grouped under five major areas of competence (i.e., factors): **I-Student Centeredness**, **II-Systems With-it-ness**, **III-Diversity Competence**, **IV-Prosocial Expertise**, and **V-Personal Management**. The responses of recent graduates demonstrated that they viewed schools as complex environments in which teachers (general and special educators) and support and related services personnel must integrate a wide range of skills on a daily basis. Some of these skills are relatively new to the curricula of professional preparation programs (eg., Systems With-it-ness, Diversity Competence).

First and foremost, our results indicate that educators should be student-centered (Factor I). Today's educator must be able to give respect to all students, earn the respect of all students,

“**T**oday's educators must be able to give respect to all students, earn the respect of all students, individualize instruction, and develop meaningful learning opportunities for each student.”

individualize instruction, and develop meaningful learning opportunities for each student. As a group the survey respondents ranked the two key items of the Student-Centeredness factor as the items highest in Importance. As a group the respondents viewed themselves as relatively well prepared to approach their teaching and other responsibilities from a student-centered perspective.

Second, recent graduates identified Systems With-it-ness (Factor II) as an important competency area. This area is characterized by such items as "collaborating with staff from other child service agencies (eg., mental health services, Department of Human Services) who are involved with the student or family." Systems With-it-ness was the most complex factor, the factor with the most dimensions to it. As such, it could be interpreted as an important factor for all teachers, and especially general education teachers. Of the respondent groups, support and related services personnel placed the greatest emphasis on Systems With-it-ness. For all teachers, and especially general education teachers, gaining skills to navigate systems and maximize resources external to the classroom, appears to be an emerging professional responsibility.

Third, Diversity Competence (Factor III) was identified as a domain of expertise educators need to meet the S-E-B needs of students. This competency area is characterized by such items as "possessing skills to collaborate with families of diverse ethnic backgrounds in order to resolve social, emotional, and behavioral problems of students." General educators, special educators, and support services personnel placed relatively equal emphasis on Diversity Competence. With changing demographics in Iowa and across the nation (Iowa Department of Special Education, 1997-1998; Hodgkinson, 1996), Diversity Competence should continue

to receive attention in preservice preparation programs, professional organizations, and research investigations. Institutions of higher education, professional groups, and education agencies would be well advised to promote understanding of diversity issues and the impact of diversity on student achievement and school adjustment.

Fourth, Prosocial Expertise (Factor IV) was viewed as a critical competency area, especially by general and special education teachers. Prosocial Expertise was given less emphasis by support and related services personnel. Both general and special education teachers reported their classroom responsibilities to include the development of students' social competency. Although direct instruction of social skills is common in special education, traditionally social skills have not been systematically taught by general education teachers.

The fifth competency area, Personal Management (Factor V), was emphasized most by general education teachers. It may be that initially novice teachers are overwhelmed by demands on their professional and personal time. This, in part, may be a result of the discrepancy between the classroom "realities" new teachers face and the expectations they formed. Research has documented that teachers of students with severe behavior disorders are especially susceptible to career stress and burnout (Wrobel, 1993). Thus, one might conclude that meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students is particularly difficult and stressful for teachers.

## Implications for the Preservice and Continuing Education of Educators

Recent graduates reported that addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of *all students is a critical role and responsibility of our schools* and their responses indicated different levels of Preparedness for this task. Generally speaking, recent graduates desired greater depth *and* broader educational experiences than they had received.

Novice educators of today face instructional and personal career-related challenges not experienced by prior generations of principals, teachers, counselors, and other service providers. The responses of recent graduates of Iowa's institutions of higher education reinforce the proposition that our schools increasingly need to be prepared to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students. To succeed in this endeavor will require preservice and inservice programming which assures the establishment of a professional repertoire that goes beyond traditional pedagogy and subject matter expertise in all novice teachers and support services personnel.

The expanded basic repertoire of educators can be grouped into five areas of expertise. Today and in the future, all educators will need greater sophistication and competency in: **a)** communication and collaboration skills, **b)** understanding and responsiveness to student diversity and individuality, **c)** knowledge of systems and strategies for improving systems' effectiveness, **d)** expertise in meeting the prosocial developmental needs of students, and **e)** self-management skills which offset the daily stresses and demands of the evolving workplace.

Although it is likely that colleges and universities will develop variations in the manner in which these competencies are taught, the need for such skills and knowledge dare not be ignored. The need for direct, systematic, and accountable college and university curricula seems evident. Respondents to the present survey advocated specific coursework with heavy reliance on case studies and increased practicum and hands-on experiences for acquiring basic competencies. Modeling, use of computer technology, and integration of research into practice were strategies recommended by respondents for both preservice and inservice preparation programs.

A long-term commitment by schools to meet the S-E-B needs of students would appear to be a first step. A commitment of colleges and universities to prepare educators for the real life demands of the classroom as they relate to meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students would seem to be an appropriate concurrent step. Once these commitments are in place, multi-disciplinary collaboration and community involvement seems essential.

**N**OTE This report was an attempt to gather information on the perspectives of recent graduates, their perceptions of student needs, and their perceptions regarding how to improve professional preparation and the continuing professional development of educators. This report is a broad sweep description of the results. Those interested in specific information on the perspectives of general educators, special educators, or support services personnel should refer to the Results. In addition, the exact comments of respondents to the open-ended questions can be made available upon request.

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